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NEWS RELEASE
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MORE THAN FOUR POUNDS OF FENTANYL SEIZED BY GANG IMPACT TEAM

RIVERSIDE – On the evening of March 9, 2021, as part of an ongoing investigation, the Riverside County Gang Impact Team (GIT), which is supervised by the DA's Bureau of Investigation, seized four and half pounds – or about two kilos -- of powdered fentanyl in Murrieta.

Fentanyl is an extremely dangerous and potent manmade opioid. It is estimated to be 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine.

It only takes about two milligrams of fentanyl to potentially be lethal for most people. For perspective of how small that amount is, it takes 5,000 milligrams to make one teaspoon. In 2020, there were 227 fentanyl-related deaths in Riverside County, up from 55 in 2018.

In this case, GIT seized two million milligrams of fentanyl, or 1 million potentially lethal doses. The fentanyl seized has a street value of about \$200,000.

A man and woman from the Los Angeles area were arrested on suspicion of transportation of fentanyl with intent to sell. They were identified as Cristobal Chavez, DOB: 10-26-75; and Yesiga Hernandez, DOB: 6-15-81.

Law enforcement agencies have seen a tremendous increase in fatal overdoses of fentanyl. The District Attorney's Office, the Gang Impact Team, and all local law enforcement agencies have made investigations, seizures, arrests, and prosecutions of fentanyl cases a major priority due to the significant risk to public safety.

The DA's Office has filed second-degree murder charges against several people accused of providing or selling fentanyl-laced drugs to people who died of fentanyl overdoses.

The most recent such filing was on March 9, 2021, when the DA's Office filed a murder charge against Samuel Leo Mussaw, DOB: 9-28-97, of San Jacinto, in connection with the March 3, 2021, death of a 23-year-old San Jacinto man.

Our office was the first DA's Office in Southern California to file a murder charge against a person suspected of selling fentanyl-laced drugs resulting in someone's death. That case was filed on Feb. 19, 2021, against Joseph Michael Costanza, DOB: 10-7-99.

The Gang Impact Team is staffed by investigators and agents from the DA's Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Marshal's Service, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations Special Services Unit, the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, and detectives from the Banning, Beaumont, Cathedral City, Corona, Desert Hot Springs, Hemet, Palm Springs, and Riverside police departments.

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